

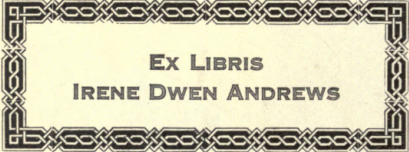
THE KINGDOM  
MAKER, A Play in  
Five Acts

A  
0  
0  
0  
3  
7  
9  
7  
8  
4



U.S. SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY

Seán O'Neill

A decorative rectangular border with a repeating geometric pattern of interlocking lines and small squares, surrounding the text.

**EX LIBRIS**  
**IRENE DWEN ANDREWS**









# The Kingdom-Maker









Seán O'Neill

# The Kingdom-Maker

*A Play in Five Acts*

BY SEOSAMH O'NEILL

LYRICS BY  
MARY DEVENPORT O'NEILL



DUBLIN :  
THE TALBOT PRESS LTD.  
89 TALBOT STREET

LONDON :  
T. FISHER UNWIN LTD.  
1 ADELPHI TERRACE



## PREFACE.

---

*At a time when the minds of men in our own country and throughout the world are turning to the problem of how to build up finer and saner systems of statesmanship out of the wreckage of war, the present study of the tragedy of an old Irish nation-builder may be of some interest.*

*Strange as it may seem, the conditions which made his work necessary were not so entirely dissimilar to our own. At the beginning of the Christian era the state of Ireland was, in some of its political aspects, not unlike that of Europe in the first decade of the twentieth century or of Greece in the period immediately preceding the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war. Two states, Connaught and Ulster, had reached the comparatively high degree of primitive power and luxury described in the great epic of the Tain Bo Cuailgne. The spirit and ambitions caused by this material development produced a demand for expansion,*

*and, under the crude conditions of the time, expansion meant a series of wars. The struggle between them seems to have begun with the celebrated Cattle Raid of Cuailgne, but it lasted for generations and, when at length the two states had squandered their riches and dissipated their energy, the deeper results of the war began to be visible as usual in unexpected forms. Successful revolts of the subject races, the spread of famine and pestilence and the general breakdown of the pre-war political system throughout the country were among the chief results. The two states whose rivalry had caused the war seem to have fared worst, for Ulster fell gradually from her old pre-eminence of culture into a semi-obscurity, and Connaught, the original aggressor, grew weaker and weaker, until at length the Gaelic State in that province was suddenly overwhelmed under a revolt of its subject races which spread to the other provinces and brought famine, pestilence and general ruin on the country.*

*It was into this welter of war and revolt that Thuahal, the Kingdom-maker of the play, returned from exile to take up the task of rebuilding the Irish state. At first his efforts were successful and the play begins with his triumph over the forces of anarchy and the choosing of his tanist,*

*or heir, in order to ensure the succession and the continuance of Thuahal's policy.*

*In addition to the Gaelic peoples of the different provinces two other races are mentioned in the play—the Attacotti or subject races of Connaught, whose revolt had originally driven Thuahal into exile, and their kinsmen the Galleoin of Leinster. The latter were semi-independent and both seem to have been largely of Firbolg, that is, pre-Gaelic origin.*

*Thus Thuahal had to face the task not only of building up a federated Ireland out of conflicting Gaelic politics, but also of fusing non-Gaelic and semi-hostile races into his unified state. The problem was in some essentials not dissimilar to that which confronts our Irish nation-builders of to-day.*

SEÓSAMH O'NEILL.

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

---

- THUAHAL ... *High-King of Ireland.*
- FIHIR ... *Daughter of Thuahal, betrothed to the King of Leinster.*
- DARINA ... *Younger daughter of Thuahal.*
- EOCHY ... *Young King of Leinster, foster-son of Thuahal and candidate for the tanistship or right of succession to the High-Kingship.*
- FERGUS ... *Young King of Ulster, suitor for the hand of Darina and also candidate for the tanistship.*
- CONRACH ... *King of Connaught.*
- EOGHAN ... *King of East Munster.*



CUROI	...	<i>King of West Munster.</i>
MAL ROCREE	...	<i>An Ulster Prince.</i>
CAHOIR	...	<i>A Leinster Prince, related to Eochy.</i>
ROS	...	<i>A Leinster Chief.</i>
CARBERY CINNCAIT		<i>A Gaileoin Prince, now Captain of Eochy's Mercenaries.</i>
MONADHAR	...	<i>A Gaileoin Chief, one of Carbery Captains.</i>
AOIFE	...	<i>Carbery Cinncait's Wife, also a Gaileoin.</i>
NIAM	...	<i>A half-crazy wandering Singer.</i>

*An Ulster Bard, Chiefs, Soldiers, Attendants, etc.*

*(The time is the 2nd Century of the Christian era, when the Gaels had come back to power in Ireland after having crushed a rebellion of the Attacotti or subject-races. These latter are alluded to either as Attacotti or Firbolgs. When mentioned in their role of mercenary troops under Gaelic Princes they are called Gaileoins.)*



# THE KINGDOM MAKER

---

## ACT I.

### SCENE I.

SCENE : *The Council Hall in the High King's Palace at Tara. (CAHOIR and ROS are waiting.)*

(THUAHAL comes in, attended by EOCHY, FERGUS, CONRACH, EOGHAN and CUROI. After them come the chiefs, including MAL ROCREE and CARBERY CINNCAIT. An Ulster bard is amongst the Ulster chiefs. MONADHAR attends on CARBERY CINNCAIT. THUAHAL goes to the high seat and sits down. The others stand round in order of precedence.)

THUAHAL :

Kings of the kingdoms, chiefs of ruling clans,  
Captains and leaders, I have summoned you

That we may make an end of a long task.  
 'Tis twenty years, my lords, since we first swore  
 To crush the rebel Attacotti hordes  
 And drive the Firbolgs from my father's kingdom.

EOGHAN :

That blighted summer that we took our oath  
 I never shall forget it.

CUROI :

No, nor I.

CONRACH :

The ears fell blackening from the sapless corn  
 And plague and famine hung over all the land,  
 While still the carrion, Attacotti Kings  
 Raided and ravaged—

CAHOIR :

And then King Thuahal came !

CUROI :

Where now are all their Attacotti Kings  
 Who rode in insolence throughout our land !

Ros :

They met him on the battlefield and died !

ALL THE CHIEFS AND KINGS :

Thuahal ! Thuahal !

THUAHAL :

These were but battles won :  
But there remained the harder task to do  
Of building a strong kingdom on the wreck  
Of war and ravage. Many patient years  
We have been building, but the end is near ;  
For I, my lords, have news for you to-day  
Better than many battles.

CUROI :

What good news  
Is better than a battle fought and won ?

THUAHAL :

My news is better, Curoi ; since to win  
A battle were a small and easy thing  
For our swift Gaels ; but slow and difficult  
To build a kingdom up in peace and mould,  
With patient craftsman's cunning hour by hour,  
A people that shall face the lightning blaze—  
When God breaks kings and kingdoms—yet  
not break.

To-day, my lords, we seize that harder task  
Into our hands. To-day a state begins  
That shall endure and grow—confederate  
Of races long tied up in warring knots  
And cramped with hatreds born of simpler ways  
Of ruling men.

CONRACH :

Alone of all our states

Ulster has stood against the general will  
To make King Eochy tanist. Has King Fergus  
At length withdrawn his claim to be your heir?  
Does he agree to Eochy's tanistship?

THUAHAL :

Fergus agrees. Darina's hand in marriage  
Is his reward. She weds him after Samhain,  
If he gives way to Eochy now.

EOCHY :

Darina!

God of my tribe!

MAL ROCREE (*striding forward*) :

Fergus has not consented!

THUAHAL (*coldly*) :

He gave consent to-day.

MAL ROCREE (*fiercely*) :

High-King, 'tis false!

What! Fergus—

FERGUS :

Silence! I have given consent.

EOCHY :

But I—I cannot—

MAL ROCREE :

By our Gods, 'tis false !  
The beauty and the comeliness and power,  
The fame and the nobility of him  
Who sits on Tara's throne—no Ulster King  
Has ever bartered for a fading face !

FERGUS :

Mal Rocree—

MAL ROCREE :

Ireland looks upon your face !  
Fergus—you dare not give her beauty up—  
You dare not—dare not—give her beauty up  
For twenty cresses and a lying smile.

FERGUS :

Lying ! Mal Rocree you shall answer this !

MAL :

Yes, lying smile for you, you liar too !  
I'll answer you on any day or hour !  
But, by the blood of Rury's line of Kings,  
No alms from Ulster's heritage shall fall  
Off Leinster's tables on my people's lips  
While I can stand on feet and handle sword.

CUROI :

Down with him !

*(CUROI and several chiefs rush towards him.)*

CONRACH (*rushing between them*):  
Back, my lords!

MAL (*fiercely*):  
No! let them come!

THUAHAL:  
Stand back, my lords. He is our bidden guest.  
(MAL *rushes to the door and turns back before  
he goes out.*)

MAL:  
To give all Ireland to a stranger clan,  
To sell our shame before the eyes of men,  
For twenty cresses,\* twenty eggs of gulls,  
A score of beehives and a woman's smile!  
God of my tribe—let me not think of it!  
(*He rushes out.*)

THE ULSTER BARD (*to FERGUS*):  
My lord——

FERGUS (*angrily*):  
Are there then others who rebel?

THE ULSTER BARD:  
I am no rebel; but in all that land,  
Where Muckish guards a spirit-haunted sea,

\*The stipend given by the High-King of Ireland to the King of Ulster when the latter swore allegiance to him. The acceptance of this was part of the formula of submission.



And Antrim's clouds still hurry o'er the stream  
Of Northern waters racing past the Moyle  
Heavy to Alba, there will be dismay  
And lamentation! Stars above the moon—  
Above—below—and thousand years are there  
Trembling with fate! You will not give them  
all,

My dear, dear lord, you will not give them all  
For this one lover?

FERGUS :

I will keep my bond,  
Were twenty thousand stars and years the gain!  
For breaking it to Thuahal and Darina!  
Ye Southern Kings—

EOCHY :

But I cannot, my lord—

FERGUS :

Eochy of Leinster, let me speak my word,  
That I may have it spoken and be gone.  
High-King and Kings of the four provinces,  
To-day I yield up Tara of our dreams  
With all the fealty and the comeliness  
Of coming years. Henceforth I am the man  
Of him whom you may choose as Thuahal's heir.  
Now, let me go.

(FERGUS goes out in silence followed by the  
*Ulstermen.*)

CONRACH :

There's nothing else to say  
Since Thuahal's son, Prince Felim, is a child,  
Who else should be the heir to Thuahal's throne  
But Eochy—Thuahal's foster son, his pupil  
Bred in his inner ways of ruling craft?  
I, too, am Eochy's man.

EOGHAN :

And I.

CUROI :

And I.

THUAHAL :

You choose King Eochy tanist?

THE KINGS :

We have chosen.

ALL THE KINGS AND CHIEFS :

Eochy! Eochy!

CUROI :

May he have luck in battle!

CONRACH :

May he have luck in council-hall and battle!

THUAHAL :

If I could give him luck 'twere luck in wishes.

EOGHAN :

In wishes !

THUAHAL :

Yes, a king's transcending wishes,  
Secret, compelling, silent, while small moods  
And vanities fret round ! Who works in fire,  
As common men in clay or bronze or stone,  
Must wish in fire not clay--no meaner stuff  
Than that all-cleansing, all-transcending fire !

CUROI :

His father's love, the bright-banked, sacred  
Boyne,  
Has given her vision to him.

CONRACH :

'Tis no wonder.

THUAHAL :

My lords, our task is done, our council ended.  
To-night we seal our work when Eochy weds  
My Fihir. 'Tis the marriage of our kingdoms.  
Their feast takes place at sundown and our bards  
Will help to while the interval with song.

(*To Eochy*) :

Come Eochy, Fihir waits us. My heart surely  
Is in the mood to-day of lavish giving ;  
Else I could not give Fihir even to you.

But, Eochy, you will love her as I've loved her.  
I know it. Come she waits us.

THE KINGS AND CHIEFS :

Thuahal ! Thuahal !

(THUAHAL, EOCHY *and all the* KINGS *go out followed by the chiefs and soldiers.* CAHOIR *and Ros remain.*)

Ros :

Far-shining forts and houses red with bronze,  
Still multitudes on many-streeted roads,  
And all men rising with acclaiming eyes  
When we with Eochy enter white-walled duns !

CAHOIR :

Did you mark Eochy's face when Thuahal spoke  
Of Fergus and Darina being wed ?

Ros :

His eyes grew strange.

CAHOIR :

'Tis good he weds to-day ;  
Else Fihir might have lost her lover, and we  
A kingdom.

Ros :

What ! you fear—

CAHOIR :

There are but two  
In all this waiting world that Thuahal loves—  
Fihir and Eochy.

Ros :

But Eochy has loved Fihir—

CAHOIR :

May he then love her still ! A broken oath  
To Fihir, and for all her waiting years  
An empty guest-call to another's feast  
Of marriage, why it were our kingdom's death  
Had Eochy dared to do it !

Ros :

Let us find him.

*(They go out and as they go three chiefs come in  
by the other door. NIAM, a crazed woman,  
follows them and, at some distance behind  
them, CARBERY CINNCAIT, the Galleoin  
chief, follows with his captain MONODHAR.  
The chiefs pass slowly through the hall.)*

1ST CHIEF :

No river-mouth in Erin but shall hear  
The chanting of our Gods as we march out  
To countless victories.

2ND CHIEF :

The very spring  
Shall halt in its full tide beneath the feet  
Of our onrushing hosts.

3RD CHIEF :

And British Kings  
Shall call in vain on their great Eastern Gods  
To shield them from the name of Thuahal.

NIAM :

I heard a song of these things once before  
A wandering song of restless Gaelic men  
Driving in galleys o'er a wandering sea.

*(The chiefs go out, followed by NIAM.  
CARBERY CINNCAIT and MONADHAR, who  
had been standing listening in the back-  
ground, come forward.)*

CARBERY :

You heard those loud-tongued hounds ?

MONADHAR :

I did, my lord.

The toils are closing on us.

CARBERY :

If they close,  
To-morrow we shall be an old man's tale

Of broken peoples, and no Firbolg mother  
Shall even dare to whisper to her child  
Of Gamanrad and Sreang and Monadhar,  
And kings who threw across the battle-track  
A sword that even the Danaan Gods had shunned  
Can your life bear such loss ?

MONADHAR :

My lord, it cannot ;  
But, if we strike, we die.

CARBERY :

We do not die !  
No race has died until the last of such  
As carries in his heart the vital fire  
That shatters kings and armies and sets blaze  
To hearts long sodden with the bitter dregs  
Of servitude—no race has died till such  
A man has died in vain to save its soul,  
And dying failed and died and lit no fire !

MONADHAR :

If you die we are dead. We have none other.

CARBERY :

And you deserve none other if your desire  
Has stooped to own as chief a hireling lord  
Of landless mercenaries. I did not take my life  
From Eochy's hands that I might sit and serve

A mean Ferdia\* at his outer gates,  
 While he builds kingdoms where our Gaileoin  
     kings  
 Ruled countless centuries. I have other plans.  
 Do you know if Rocree leaves for home to-night ?

MONADHAR :

I shall find out.

CARBERY :

Tell him that I would see him  
 Before he goes.

MONADHAR :

I will.

(MONADHAR *goes out.*)

CARBERY :

Even if he fail me,  
 There's yet another—one far mightier,  
 And dangerous to touch in other times  
 And moods, but plastic now—even he might  
     serve.

(*He goes out as the curtain falls.*)

\*Ferdia, the great warrior who served Maev and the Connaught Gaels so faithfully, was a Firbolg.



## SCENE II.

TIME : *The same day, a little later.*

SCENE : *The Queen's Grianan at Tara. All one side of the room opens on the royal lawn, which can be seen in the background. (FIHIR and DARINA are in the room. FIHIR is standing in front of a mirror of polished metal and sings as she arranges her toilet for the marriage-feast. DARINA is lying moodily on a couch.)*

FIHIR (*singing*) :

There is a glen where garlic grows.

'Tis good men marry women without money,  
There fern grows too and spicy thyme,  
And all the branches of the trees  
Are hanging low with heavy bees,  
With bees made opulent with loaded honey.

'Tis good men marry women without money.

(*As she sings she goes to the open side of the grianan and looks out on the lawn.*)

FIHIR :

Look, sister, look—the marriage-feast begins  
And all the skies are reddened with their fires.

Will you not rouse you from your heavy mood  
And come to share my greatest joy with me ?

DARINA :

I will come presently—do not ask me now.

FIHIR (*singing*) :

Through all the glen a long stream flows,  
'Tis good men marry women without lands.  
A lengthy water muttering rhyme,  
While through its shallows one by one,  
Throughout the day the red trout run.  
Sun-drunken salmon lie in drowsy bands.  
'Tis good men marry women without lands.

FIHIR :

Darina, you would come if you but knew  
What 'tis to get the one thing you desire  
After long waiting !

DARINA :

I—I do not know,  
Nor ever shall. Go, sister, they await you  
Already at the feast beside your—king.  
I shall come presently—when all is over.

FIHIR (*going out*) :

You will come soon, Darina ?

DARINA :

Yes, I will.

(FIHIR *goes out.*)

Eochy and Fihir! Now I am alone,  
Until the ending of the meaningless  
White world shall come again! I sleep no more!  
Now I no more have dreams! for all around  
The empty, pitiless, slow-moving things  
Have hemmed me in—the streets and forts and  
years

And hosts of speaking kings—

(EOCHY *rushes in.*)

She is not here.

EOCHY :

I do not look for her! I come for you!

DARINA :

You come for me!

EOCHY :

'Tis now too late to lie!

I will not give you up!

DARINA :

You cannot give

A woman up who never has been yours.

EOCHY :

You have been mine since that first day you came

From Conrach's fosterage six months ago  
To Tara's Court.

DARINA :  
You take too much—

EOCHY :  
No! No!

Your eyes at our first meeting told your love,  
Before you knew my name.

DARINA :  
I did not know  
That you were Fihir's lover—hers for years.

EOCHY :  
I never loved her! Oh! this talk! We lose  
The precious moments—

DARINA :  
They were lost before  
We ever met!

EOCHY :  
They were not lost! Darina!  
I cannot marry Fihir now! I cannot!  
I go to tell the High-King—

DARINA :  
What!

EOCHY :

That we—

DARINA :

This week I marry Fergus if you break  
Your word to her because of me !

EOCHY :

You could not !

DARINA :

You soon shall know what I can do.

EOCHY :

But love—

DARINA :

That cannot help you now. All that is done.

EOCHY :

Oh, 'tis not done ! Nothing but death can end  
Such love as ours.

DARINA :

Then, Eochy, it is death !

EOCHY :

You sentence us to death !

DARINA :

Rather than her !

Fihir shall never die that I may live.

EOCHY :

Oh! 'tis not death for her as 'tis for us.  
Her love is but affection—tenderness  
Such as she bears her father—

DARINA :

What is yours,  
That you should say hers is but tenderness?  
If your love had been such as I have felt,  
You had not squandered it before I came  
On Fihir or another.

(CARBERY CINNCAIT *appears at the back*  
*listening.*)

EOCHY :

Squandered it!

DARINA :

'Tis but a common love that cannot wait,  
But gives itself to those that come the way!  
Had you but waited for me—

EOCHY :

How could I  
Have waited for a woman I never knew?

DARINA :

A thousand years I had been waiting for you!  
I would have waited for a thousand more

Rather than give myself up to another  
Had you been true to me before I came !  
But you—you were not. Now my waiting's  
ended !

EOCHY :

Darina ! Oh ! 'tis true ! I should have waited.  
I have done grievous wrong to you, my lover ;  
Darina—

DARINA :

It is idle.

EOCHY :

You will not come !

DARINA :

You are too late.

EOCHY :

Then all is lost !

*(CARBERY goes away from the door.)*

DARINA :

Not all.

The glory and the power and the rule,  
That countless kings would give their hearts to  
buy,  
Are in your hands to-day !

EOCHY :

I am your lover !

You will not cage me to their High-King's throne,  
Who am your lover and am nothing else !  
Darina—

DARINA :

I am going to the feast  
Will you not come ?

EOCHY :

Oh ! You'll not kill our love !

DARINA :

Our love to me is but an outworn tale  
Of lovers whose dead ashes centuries  
Have blown upon the winds ! Come, Eochy,  
come,  
Your guests await you.

*(NIAM rushes in and calls out.)*

NIAM :

Fihir, he is here.

I knew that I should find him.

*(She turns to Eochy and Darina.)*

I can find  
All that there is of beauty in the world,  
Save what goes scattered down the hurrying sea,



And all dead women carry to their graves  
For that is never to be seen again.

*(Stands in front of DARINA and points at her.  
She sings) :*

You dead women in your graves,  
You made beauty long ago ;  
But unceasing waters flow,  
And great unattending waves  
Carry all things that we know,  
And they wither and grow old,  
Are you nothing now but mould  
Cold and brown ?  
You who were more bright than a crown,  
And amethyst, and emerald,  
And all that gorgeous red and yellow gold !

*(FIHIR comes in.)*

FIHIR :

The sorrow of a forest under fruit  
Upon you both ! Why, Eochy, all the Kings  
And Chiefs are waiting at our marriage-feast,  
While you two stay and chatter idly here.

DARINA :

He was entreating me to come with him  
Without delay into his marriage-feast.

FIHIR :

And you ?

DARINA :

I could not let a traitor mood  
Intrude upon your gladness.

FIHIR :

You have no mood  
Whose gloom would not be brighter, dear, to me  
Than others' gladness. Come you to our feast.

*(CARBERY comes in.)*

CARBERY :

Oh, you have found him.

FIHIR :

Carbery Cinncait here  
Would have it that you went some other way.  
But come. Already all the warriors  
Have thrice saluted earth and moon and sea  
As they move sun-wise entering the feast  
And every bard is launched into his tale  
Of Fomor battles and of Danaan queens  
Who lived and loved and died long, long ago.  
I would not miss one word. Darina, come.

*(They go out and Eochy is following them  
when CARBERY stops him.)*

CARBERY :

“ Two daughters fairer than the clouds of  
heaven,”

That is the harp's refrain when men pluck strings  
At Thuahal's court ; but when they sing alone  
There's only one name comes into their songs.

EOCHY :

Darina !

CARBERY :

Yes, Darina ! All men wait  
Watching the beauty in Darina's face  
And whispering of honour ! None but know  
A High-King's honour cannot bear such loss ;  
And yet King Eochy—

EOCHY :

She is out of reach.

CARBERY :

A High-King's reach is other ! By my sword  
A little chief to gain a cattle-spoil  
Had made more effort.

EOCHY :

I have made all effort,  
Yet Fihir in an hour will be my wife.

CARBERY :

Then let her be your wife and bring her home  
Into our Leinster lands—

*(Here he breaks off and whispers.)*

EOCHY :

Never for me  
Shall harm befall one hair of Fihir's head.

CARBERY :

But there's no need to harm her. We can keep

*(He whispers again.)*

EOCHY :

The thing could not be done.

CARBERY :

It can be done.  
No year but kings do far more dangerous deeds.

EOCHY :

But not such deeds as this impossible one.

CARBERY :

Courage and possibility are one.  
There is no other lord of deed but that  
High-hearted courage! 'Tis the only key  
That opens the enchanted chambers of the world!  
A High-King dare not fear.

EOCHY :

I do not fear.

If the thing could be done—

CARBERY :

It can be done,

If you but do it now before the Samhain,  
When Fergus weds Darina.

EOCHY :

If it could—

*(He pauses.)*

Yet even if it could not, when I tried,  
And I lay dead for that before the Samhain—

*(He pauses again.)*

At least I should not see her wed.

CARBERY :

You'll do it ?

EOCHY :

I trust you to the full in this.

*(CAHOIR comes in.)*

CAHOIR :

All wait your presence at the banquet, Eochy.  
The High-King grows impatient and Queen Fihir

EOCHY :

I come, I come.

*(EOCHY and CAHOIR go out.)*

CARBERY :

He's taken in the net,  
This paltry King who, holding in his grasp  
What proudest kings and races fought and strove  
To win and died in winning, turns aside  
To covet beauty in a woman's face.

*(MONADHAR comes in.)*

MONADHAR :

Mal Rocree waits you in his tent, my lord.

CARBERY :

I go to him. He is a blunt-edged tool,  
But useful to my hand till I arise  
To my full stature and must put him by.

*(They go out and the curtain falls.)*

END OF THE 1ST ACT.

## ACT II.

TIME : *Six weeks later.*

SCENE : *The Queen's Grianan at Tara—as in Act I., Scene II. (DARINA and FERGUS are alone. DARINA is embroidering and FERGUS is standing up.)*

DARINA :

Oh! I am tired of stories! Put it by.

FERGUS :

You soon grow weary.

DARINA :

If I had a mind  
Like you, good Fergus, who can tell and tell  
Your stories, flushing over all the deeds,  
And trembling with emotion over loves  
That are but passing—but, what use to me  
Are Emer and Cuhullin?

FERGUS :

Fihir loved  
Our tales, and on that day before she went

Southward with Eochy, when I told her that one  
 She wept through all her joy for very love  
 And pity that such lovers should have tired,  
 Even for a moment, ere their love was done.  
 But you are not like Fihir.

DARINA :

If but Fihir

And you had loved each other—she and you  
 Had been so happy in your hero-tales ;  
 But I—a living woman—

FERGUS :

I but tell

Our Northern lovers' stories that your heart  
 May hear me calling to you.

DARINA :

I have heard you

And all your other young unfeeling lovers.

FERGUS :

Unfeeling lovers !

DARINA :

Yes! even Deirdre, she

Who cast herself from off the cliffs from one  
 Such Ulster king—even she the chess-player—



FERGUS :

None ever loved as she !

DARINA :

'Twas a high seeming,  
With love less high than seeming—else how had  
she

Played on at playing with such artist mood  
For high heroic endings, while the man  
She loved sat doomed beside her !—still a child  
Among her play-things, even when love grew  
bitter

And she were better dead !

FERGUS :

Oh ! do not speak  
Lightly of Deirdre's love ! Unnumbered hosts  
Paid down each grain of doom for that one love—  
King after king who sank beneath the swamp  
Of that most dreadful name, to pay the price  
Of that one shameful deed—and still they died,  
Paying their eric till the stain was clear !

DARINA :

Because one woman sprang into that sea  
When love was dead and she could live no more !  
Oh ! 'twere an easy end for any woman  
To spring from off such cliffs into that sea

If he were gone and hers were but a tale  
Of deaths as easy as your Deirdre died.

FERGUS :

Let us not talk of Deirdre ; she will put  
Her sorrow on our hearts as she has done  
On many others ! Rather let me tell  
Of all the beauty of our Northern lands—  
Beann Boirche's mountains when the night is  
near,

And Carlingford's brown hills, where you and I  
Might even now be happy, if you'd come,  
Nor wait till Samhain ! you can see them calling.  
Will you not look, Darina ?

*(He points to the window.)*

DARINA (*fiercely*) :

There are hills  
That I have never seen that call on me—  
All day and night they call most bitterly !  
Yet I shall never see them ! Oh ! my heart  
Is breaking !

*(She stands up and looks wildly round.)*

FERGUS :

But what hills ?

DARINA :

If you lay dead—

FERGUS :

Lay dead !

DARINA (*more calmly*) :

But you are helpless ! You mean nothing !  
You are but one of all the desolate things,  
The blind unwearying things that hunt me down.

FERGUS :

I cannot understand you, but I know  
You are most cruel to me ! How can you—

DARINA :

Why do you love me ?

FERGUS :

I—I cannot tell

For always you are bitter ! but I love you !  
You are all beauty you—your eyes—your face—  
Your look—your body's quiver—all life's in it !

DARINA :

There have been women whose liberating hands  
Have torn the traitor beauty from their faces,  
That pulled them down among the common  
desires ;

But if there were a man whose eyes contained  
All life for a woman, how could she live unsightly  
Within the same white world as that man's eyes ?

FERGUS :

There is some other man! I always knew

DARINA :

I did not say so. Death were easier.  
What do you say?

FERGUS :

I love you.

DARINA :

Yes ; but you  
Do not fear death, although my eyes are yours  
To see and to remember, while you live.  
How can you face the loss of them in battle?  
I, who am stronger than you, cannot face it.

FERGUS :

There is no sense in what you say, Darina.  
How are you stronger than me, and what eyes  
Are those that you would lose?

DARINA :

Oh nothing! Nothing!  
No craft of God or man or smith could bridge  
The gulf that lies between us! Perhaps some tale  
Might help to bridge it. Tell me once again  
Of how Cuhullin died, when Calitin  
And all the fearful disembodied things

Flung themselves on him, darkening all the sky  
Until he died.

FERGUS :

Will you not let me tell  
This dearer story of why I have come  
Back to you from my North to pray of you—

DARINA :

I promised I would wed you after Samhain  
If I were living. When the Samhain is gone  
Come back and seek me. I shall keep my word  
If I am living ; but I'll keep no more  
No not one day or hour—

FERGUS :

But why the Samhain ?  
You wait for nothing.

DARINA :

Nothing ! Nothing ! Nothing !

FERGUS :

Oh, if you knew how lonely is my North  
And how one month, one week, yes even one day  
That you were nearer to me would make glad  
Those dreary months of waiting—

*(Attendant rushes in.)*

ATTENDANT :

Queen Darina,

The Leinster King has come to Tara and he  
Would speak with you.

DARINA (*springing up*) :

What! Eochy come to Tara!

ATTENDANT :

King Thuahal met him but an hour ago  
Riding post haste to Tara with some news.  
They have just ridden in together now.

DARINA :

What news!

ATTENDANT :

I do not know, but Thuahal looks  
As he looked on that day Queen Emer died.  
I fear 'tis dreadful news!

DARINA :

Were Eochy and he

Friends when they came?

ATTENDANT :

Oh yes!

DARINA :

Tell him to come

To me at once. (*The attendant goes out.*)

This senseless hope!

FERGUS :

What hope !

DARINA :

Oh, nothing !

FERGUS :

Can it be that Fihir is dead ?

DARINA :

'Tis possible !

FERGUS :

But—

DARINA :

Go ! if Eochy comes  
To speak with me I do not want you here.

FERGUS :

You do not want me !

DARINA (*very impatiently*) :

No !

*(Attendant comes in hastily.)*

ATTENDANT :

Queen Fihir's dead.  
She died a week ago of plague.

*(Attendant rushes out.)*

FERGUS :

Of plague !

DARINA (*wildly*) :

Fihir is dead ! Fihir is dead !

(EOCHY *comes in.*)

EOCHY :

Darina !

(DARINA *rushes to him.*)

DARINA :

Oh Lover ! Lover ! You are come for me !

Oh Lover ! Lover ! Lover ! You at last !

FERGUS :

Deserted ! Thrown aside for him ! Darina !

EOCHY :

Darina !

DARINA :

Lover ! I am yours, at last !

FERGUS (*advances threateningly*) :

I who had given my kingdom up and thrown  
My life beneath her feet.

DARINA :

Eochy ! Eochy !

(EOCHY *motions towards* FERGUS.)

EOCHY :

You have forgotten Fergus.



DARINA :

'Tis no matter !

I have remembered too much till this hour,  
But now I fling them from me—all the memories  
Of him or her, all things in this full world  
That I have known but you !

FERGUS :

You soon shall know  
Things that were best forgotten, when my sword  
Shall shear those lips you kiss—

(THUAHAL *comes in.*)

THUAHAL :

What is this talk  
Of lips and shearing swords ?

DARINA :

I love King Eochy,  
And now that Fihir is dead there is no power  
Shall ever tear me from him !

THUAHAL :

You love Eochy !

DARINA :

Yes, I have loved him all these bitter months  
When I must hide it for her sake and his !

THUAHAL (*to EOCHY*):

But you? You do not—

EOCHY:

I would marry her

Now that Queen Fihir's dead.

DARINA (*fiercely*):

There is no power

Shall ever tear me from you!

THUAHAL:

But the promise

That you have given to Fergus—

FERGUS (*changing suddenly to supplication*):

Oh, Darina,

Even now will you not come to me! I love you

As he could never love! I gave the kingdom—

EOCHY:

I did not buy the kingdom!

THUAHAL:

'Tis not yours

Or his to sell or buy. You are my heir

And all our plans are based upon you.

FERGUS :

He

Shall never be my High-King while I live  
If he deprive me of my love !

DARINA :

He cannot

Deprive you of a love you never had !  
He does but guard my life ! For, know, High-  
King,  
That on the day when I became his Queen  
*(pointing to FERGUS)*  
I would have driven this knife into my heart  
Rather than he should touch me !

THUAHAL :

Nothing more

Is left to say.

FERGUS :

You'll let a broken word  
Deprive me of my love and kingdom !

THUAHAL :

She

Is free. No man can force her hand ; though  
'twere  
More fitting for my daughter if she had waited  
To seize her lover till some other day

When he had been less recent from the corpse  
Of one who was her sister and his wife.

DARINA :

I cannot stand on ceremonies ! I  
Had waited till my heart was old and grey  
With deadly waiting, that no smallest hurt  
Might touch her living heart !

FERGUS :

But what is this—  
This idle talk of the unsuffering dead  
To me while I stand here in agony !

DARINA :

No hand can heal your agony, if I  
Alone can heal it, since the price were death !  
I have been willing once to pay that price.  
Not even for her would I a second time  
Give up my lover !

THUAHAL :

'Tis not asked !

FERGUS :

Then I—

THUAHAL :

You will do nothing senseless. If you claim  
That you have yielded up your tanist right

On terms that have been broken, I will call  
A conference of kings to judge your claim  
And clear the issue. (*To Eochy*) You are  
willing?

Eochy :

Yes.

Fergus :

The curses of the gods of truth on you  
And him and her and all your kings! Oh, I—  
My heart is broken. (*He rushes out.*)

Thuahal :

If a human heart  
Can break so easily, then I have none ;  
For my heart's dead within my breast to-day  
Yet 'twill not break. Oh Fihir! Fihir! you ;  
I could have spared all others more than you  
But now my kingdom crumbles, and your death  
And all that we have dreamt through waiting  
years  
Is counted nothing, weighed against the loves  
Of unconsidering children.

Darina :

Eochy, come.

(*Thuahal stands staring blindly, and Eochy  
and Darina go out together. The curtain  
falls.*)

END OF ACT II.

## ACT III.

TIME : *A fortnight later.*

SCENE : *Eochy's Castle at Naas. An entrance hall off the banquet-room. (AOIFE comes out of the banquet-hall and stands a moment listening to sounds of revelry from the banquet.)*

AOIFE :

King Eochy married to Darina ! well,  
He has his wish and now we have two queens  
(MONADHAR comes in the outer door.)  
In Leinster's Kingdom—'tis a tangled tale.

MONADHAR :

'Twill be more tangled yet ere Carbery's done  
With Thuahal or with Eochy. Where is he ?  
He bade me have the Gaileoins ready now  
For march or battle.

AOIFE :

He has not yet left  
The welcome-feast, for it has but begun,  
And Eochy might suspect him, if he rose  
Before the drinking—

MONADHAR :

Hush ! Here come more guests.

*(They draw to one side. Three guests come in the outer door. They are richly appparelled and are evidently great chlefs.)*

1ST GUEST :

'Tis a great feast. Did you see how they wait  
In hosts around the entrance of the dun,  
Calling on Eochy's and Darina's names  
With shouts of welcome ?

2ND GUEST :

You would think to hear them,  
That 'twas a battle broken on the north !

3RD GUEST :

I've never seen such crowds as line the ways.  
Even Fihir had not such a home-coming  
The month before she died.

*(CARBERY comes out of the banquet hall.)*

What, Carbery, you.  
You come out early from the banquet.

2ND GUEST :

He

Was always a poor feaster, Carbery,  
He'll never give his kingdom for a song.

1ST GUEST :

Nor swim the Suir in flood to share a feast.

3RD GUEST :

'Tis time you gave a feast, my Carbery,  
To still those mockers who complain that you  
Are ill to meet upon a journey's end,  
For those who love good welcome.

CARBERY :

I shall give one.  
'Twere pity you should miss a Gaileoin feast,  
Who love good welcome at your journey's end.

2ND GUEST :

A feast from Carbery !

3RD GUEST :

What !

1ST GUEST :

I must be there !

You will invite me ?

2ND GUEST :

Me too !

3RD GUEST :

Aye, and me !



CARBERY :

You all must come to my poor feast. I hope  
That 'twill be to your liking ; but, you know,  
I am no artist like you Gaelic men,  
The only song that I can sing is this (*touching  
his sword.*) -

3RD GUEST :

'Tis a good song when one has other songs  
Between its intervals.

1ST GUEST :

Come, we are late.

(*They go into the banquet-hall.*)

CARBERY :

You shall have other songs and that song too.  
The interval is shorter than you dream.

(*MONADHAR comes forward.*)

(*To MONADHAR*) :

Have you the Gaileoins ready for the field ?

MONADHAR :

I have, my lord.

CARBERY :

Go, Aoife, go at once,  
Set Fihir free and tell her all the tale  
That we have planned, then bring her to the feast

AOIFE :

I would the story had a clearer end.  
Carbery—if we should fail!

CARBERY :

It was a slave  
Who tended swine in the dank Deicsin woods  
Who made that song of failure! Go, I say!  
(AOIFE goes out.)

MONADHAR :

Does Eochy think that you keep Fihir far  
From him and her within your southern fort?

CARBERY :

He does, and that will be no common feast  
When that last guest walks unexpected in  
To share their gladness!

MONADHAR :

Someone comes, my lord!

CARBERY :

Go, you, and with the Gaileoins hold the gate.  
I shall watch here till she sends Fihir in.

(MONADHAR leaves by the outer door and  
EOCHY and DARINA come in by the banquet-  
hall door.)

EOCHY :

Why did you leave the banquet-hall so soon,  
Carbery? The feast had hardly yet begun.

CARBERY :

I thought I heard a tumult at the gate,  
And I have sent my captain out to see  
If anything has happened.

DARINA :

What could happen?

CARBERY :

May Dess make smooth the path before your  
feet,  
Most generous queen. Someone must still keep  
watch.  
While all the clansmen feast.

EOCHY (*to DARINA*) :

He keeps our guard.  
One moment. I would hear some news from him.

(*EOCHY and CARBERY talk together in a low  
voice. DARINA watches CARBERY sharply.*)

CARBERY (*going out*) :

Fear not, my lord, myself will go and see  
That all goes well. Dess speed you, generous  
queen. (*He goes out.*)

DARINA :

“Fear not, my lord”! Why should King  
Eochy fear

In his own palace? I distrust that man—  
Those lean, grey, curving, Attacotti hands—  
And that cold face that looks as 'twere the grave  
Of murdered peoples!

(EOCHY *has been listening through her speech ;  
he starts suddenly.*)

EOCHY :

Listen! what is that?

DARINA :

'Tis nothing but the soldiers' feasting shouts.

EOCHY :

Did you not hear a noise of armed men?

DARINA :

I can hear nothing. 'Tis this mood of yours,  
This listening, sudden, starting, brooding mood  
That has oppressed you since our marriage morn!  
Has Fihir's death—

EOCHY :

What! Fihir's death! no! no,  
'Tis but a passing trouble. Do not mind it.

DARINA :

Oh I must mind it, Eochy ! We have won  
Out of the depth of sorrow such a gladness,  
Such sudden, such unhop'd for, lifelong gladness  
As never human lovers won, yet you,  
Now that we've won it, brood and start and  
listen  
As if the dead might rise and wrest it from us !

EOCHY :

The dead might wrest it from us !

DARINA :

Eochy, lover !

What is your trouble ? tell me—

EOCHY :

I—I cannot !

DARINA :

You cannot !

EOCHY :

No ! I mean, not yet ! Darina,  
I thought we should be happy, but there's  
nothing—

Oh lover ! there is nothing now—there's nothing  
Can give us happiness till we're alone !

DARINA :

Alone !

EOCHY :

Away from all ! on some far shore !

DARINA :

'Tis a wild wish for Ireland's coming King.  
Why should we leave your kingdom, moody  
lover ?

EOCHY :

There's none could come between us there—

DARINA :

—While here  
Your Kings come crowding in ! If that is all,  
I too could wish that we were far away.

EOCHY (*with sudden hope*) :

Darina, you will come with me.

DARINA :

You jest !

EOCHY :

No, no ! I do not jest. We'll go at once.

DARINA :

But, why ?

EOCHY :

Oh, do not ask me !

DARINA :

This is madness !

EOCHY :

Oh, 'tis not madness ! If you knew—

DARINA :

I would,  
Were you some common King, not Thuahal's son,  
I would go with you to the end of the world  
And all impossible things ; but you—'tis  
madness !

EOCHY :

Oh, must I tell you !

DARINA :

You need never tell me !  
My heart suspected it before you asked me.

EOCHY :

You cannot know !

DARINA :

I do ! 'Tis that you love  
As I have loved, and you—you cannot bear  
This madness of our love that would dissolve

And shatter all the kingdoms of the world  
Rather than lose one grain of love's high trea-  
sure!

EOCHY :

'Tis that I would not lose it all! Darina!  
Love! Love! Do not refuse me now again!  
Oh, if you love me, come with me to-day  
Or we shall pay a cost that none have paid!

DARINA :

We'll pay no cost, my Eochy! You and I  
Shall have a greater love in Ireland's plains,  
In spite of kingships, than their old-time lovers,  
Etain or she whom all men praise in songs!

EOCHY :

Oh, 'tis not possible, Darina! We—  
We'll cross the Eastern sea at once—leave now—  
There is a reason that compels us to it!  
Our love—our life—our all depends upon it!  
I see all clearly now—

DARINA :

But, Eochy, why?

EOCHY :

I'll tell you later! we must go at once—  
Now—now—where we shall be alone and none



Can come to spoil our love—What's that?  
 (FIHIR *rushes in*)

'Tis she!

DARINA:

Oh Fihir—Eochy—oh—(*she staggers back and falls*).

FIHIR:

'Tis true! 'tis true!  
 (EOCHY *rushes to DARINA and lifts her up*.)

EOCHY:

The rattle in her throat! Darina! I—  
 Come back to me! Darina! she's not dead!

(FIHIR, *who has been standing staring, now stumbles out of the room moaning*.)

EOCHY:

No! She's not dead! her lips are trembling yet!  
 The druid! quick, the druid! Cahoir! Ros!

(*He lays DARINA down and rushes out. When Eochy rushes out, the revelling grows loud in the banquet-hall and singing is heard from inside the banquet-hall door. After each verse sung there is loud applause and laughter.*)

## THE SONG :

The Attacotti are fought and dead,  
The wind has carried them over the west,  
We've shaken this land till all have fled,  
But the Gaelic men and the Gods that are  
best.

We broke the tusks of the Firbolg boar,  
The ravens have tasted his flesh and his eyes,  
We have scattered his bones to marsh and shore  
And shouted aloud to the thanking skies.

*(CARBERY comes in as the song ends and goes  
over and looks at the body of DARINA.)*

## CARBERY :

'Tis worse than I had hoped for ! Earth or sky  
Shall never give the breath of life again  
To that one mouth ! and there is yet worse—  
'tis they

*(He draws aside. EOCHY and the DRUID  
rush in and CARBERY slips out.)*

## EOCHY :

Oh, heal her, Druid ! heal her ! She's not dead.  
*(The DRUID stoops over DARINA'S body.)*

## DRUID :

Her heart has stopped ! Nothing can bring  
her back !

EOCHY :

You will not heal her for me ! Oh, that look !  
*(He turns away convulsively.)*

DRUID :

A thousand years of night have fallen now  
*(Two girls rush in wildly.)*

1ST GIRL :

My lord—the Queen

*(She sees DARINA and stares wildly)*

Darina ! oh, what's that !

DRUID :

Speak quickly, woman—what has brought you  
 here ?

2ND GIRL :

The other Queen, my lord, the Queen who died—

1ST GIRL :

She has drunk poison ! She is dying now !

EOCHY :

Fihir !

DRUID :

What ! Fihir, too !

1ST GIRL :

She tears her throat

And calls on Eochy—

2ND GIRL :

And Darina, too !

(EOCHY stares wildly at the outer door.)

EOCHY :

A deadly wind is coming through that door—  
A fearful thing—

(CAHOIR comes in with FIHIR'S body.)

CAHOIR :

It is the murdered Queen !

(The girls rush into the banquet-room.)

CAHOIR (*fiercely to Eochy*) :

'Tis not another lie ! She's dead at last !

(He sees DARINA and starts back.)

What ! She ! She, too !

DRUID :

There's nothing here but death !

CAHOIR (*wildly*) :

How could I dream that he could weave such lies,  
Who never lied to any man before !

And now no hope nor help for this but death !

(A crowd of chiefs bursts in with wild looks  
from the banquet-hall.)

What do you seek ?

THE CHIEFS :  
The Queens ! Who killed the Queens ?

1ST CHIEF :  
Let him stand forth who slew them !

CAHOIR :  
Back, my lords !

2ND CHIEF :  
Who murdered Thuahal's daughters !

3RD CHIEF :  
Swords ! out swords !  
(EOCHY *turns and looks at them. They fall  
back.*)

4TH CHIEF :  
Oh God ! can that be Eochy's face—the King !  
(*A soldier rushes in.*)

SOLDIER :  
My lords ! My lords ! to arms ! the Gaileoin  
bands  
Are marching northwards now in battle haste  
With Carbery Cinncait—

CAHOIR :  
Carbery Cinncait !

Ros :  
What !

CAHOIR :

Oh, Ros, how could we have forgotten him !

SOLDIER :

And as they march they cry out to all men  
That Eochy slew the Queens with his own hand !

Ros :

Tara ! They make for Tara with the news !

CAHOIR :

Upon their track ! Upon their track at once  
Kill—capture—silence them alive or dead  
Before they get to Tara with that news !

*(CAHOIR, ROS and all the CHIEFS rush out.)*

DRUID :

A traitor's journey and a Firbolg tale,  
With Leinster waiting at the end of it  
For death !

*(Women come in and begin to arrange the  
bodies.)*

EOCHY :

No ! no ! you must not touch her !  
She— Your rough hands hurt her !

WOMAN :

She is dead, my lord !

We only lay them out for burial !

*(EOCHY throws himself wildly on the body.)*

DRUID *(putting his arm round him and trying to lead him away)*

Come ! come ! my son ! let be the quiet dead !

*(The keen is heard rising and falling outside as the curtain falls.)*

END OF THE 3RD ACT.

## ACT IV.

TIME : *Some weeks later.*

SCENE : *The Council Chamber at Tara. Night-fall. (ATTENDANT goes round lighting the torches. NIAM comes in.)*

NIAM :

I thought that I had found out peace at last ;  
But all the harpers of the peaceful Shee  
Could not put peace upon these restless Gaels !

ATTENDANT :

They only think of vengeance and of war  
'Gainst Leinster now. Listen—more stormy  
Kings  
Come in with shoutings and the noise of spears  
To plan their vengeance and King Eochy's death.

NIAM :

The sea is restless in her bed to-night !

(CARBERY and FERGUS come in. The  
ATTENDANT goes out.)



CARBERY :

They say that as she died she called your name,  
Though that helps little now. (*To NIAM*) Away !  
Away !

NIAM (*stands in front of them*) :

The new moon homing with her back to earth  
And no bird sings within the darkening woods  
Save the black songless Attacotti bird !

(*She points to CARBERY*).

(*She sings*) :

I gave you two leafy woods, big-footed black-  
bird,

The oak-wood and willow-wood close to my  
door.

And what did you give me back, wasteful, un-  
grateful ?

A long-drawn out, profitless whistle you gave  
me—

That and no more !

(*EOGHAN, CONRACH, CUROI and other CHIEFS  
come in.*)

EOGHAN :

Who would have thought our peace was but the  
sleep  
Between two cries !

CONRACH :

As long as I have life  
I'll never understand it !

EOGHAN :

Oh, 'tis clear  
Some raging madness must have racked his  
blood !

CUROI :

'Twas incantations have been practised on him.  
There's nothing else can cause such treachery.

EOGHAN :

Who brought the news ?

CARBERRY :

'Twas I—a month ago.

EOGHAN :

What did the High-King say ?

CARBERRY :

He and his guests  
Sat on in silence for a moment's space  
Breathless and staring—

NIAM :

Oh, 'twas pitiful !

## CARBERY :

Then from those silent faces came a cry  
As if they saw the monstrous Fomor Gods  
Come storming o'er the ramparts—some with  
hands

Upon their eyes fell moaning—others there  
Groped blindly for their weapons—but the King  
Stared till his eye-balls seemed to fill the room  
With agony of weeping, though no tear  
Or cry came from him !

## CONRACH :

All their tribal Gods  
Have mercy on the women and the children  
Of Leinster's clans !

## FERGUS :

Yes, they shall shortly know  
What 'tis to taste of sorrow undeserved,  
As we have tasted !

## NIAM :

Soon you too shall taste  
\*The water of the lake of Neimidh's cow  
Between two darknesses ! You too shall hear  
The fluttering of the birds of Soileach's stream—  
A deadly hearing !

\*These things were geis or taboo to the King of Ulster.

CUROI :

God avert that speech  
For 'tis his prohibition !

CONRACH :

Hush ! The King !

*(THUAHAL comes in and goes silently to the  
King's seat. All are silent.)*

THUAHAL :

My lords, you know why you are here to-night.  
I had two daughters and a fosterson  
A while ago. The man is still alive  
And I have summoned you to lead our men  
Southward to slay him.

FERGUS :

There's nothing else to say.  
We have no need of speech till that is done.

CONRACH :

But is there not a messenger outside  
Sent by the Leinstermen ? Will we not hear  
What message he has brought before we go  
To kill and ravage ?

FERGUS :

By my tribal Gods—

EOGHAN (*to* FERGUS) :

Conrach and I have seen the cloud of war  
Hang over all this country like a doom  
When you were but a child. 'Twere well if you  
Were silent till we spoke.

THE KINGS :

The messenger !

CUROI :

The message must be heard !

CONRACH (*to* THUAHAL) :

You'll not refuse,  
High-King, to hear the messenger ?

THUAHAL :

Bring him in.

*(A Captain goes out and brings ROS in. Dead  
silence prevails during his absence.)*

THUAHAL (*to* ROS) :

You bear a message from the Leinstermen ?

ROS :

I bear a message from the Leinster King.

THUAHAL :

Does he deny the deed ?

ROS :

He denies nothing.

THUAHAL :

What is your message then ?

ROS :

He offers you  
His life as eric for your daughters' death  
If you will give his guiltless people peace.

(THUAHAL *looks silently at him.*)

CARBERY (*in a half-aside to FERGUS*) :  
His life's already forfeited.

FERGUS :

'Tis ours.

And we shall come and take it !

CONRACH :

Hush ! the King.

THUAHAL :

I shall give peace to Leinster—lasting peace !  
For every hair on murdered Fihir's head  
There shall be silence in a Leinster clan,  
Unending peace and silence !

EOGHAN :  
You'll not take  
The King's own life for eric !

THUAHAL :  
There's yet room  
For graves in Brugh of Boyne !

FERGUS :  
No High-King lies  
In that last place dishonoured !

CONRACH :  
But revenge  
Such as you plan, my lord, may be the grave  
Of all you have created !

EOGHAN :  
If we waste  
Our honour and our strength in this revenge—

THUAHAL :  
Honour is never wasted ! I have ruled  
This land for twenty years. If any came,  
Through all that time, demanding right, I paid !  
I did not pause to count the cost but paid !  
Do you now truck and haggle o'er my shame !

EOGHAN :  
I do not truck or haggle !

CONRACH :

There's no shame

Can touch King Thuahal, if he do not stoop  
To break himself the good that he has made !

THUAHAL :

The common good you seek was never mine !  
I did not make a Kingdom so that men  
Might eat and drink and sleep and eat again  
Upon a sheltered place ! These hands shall  
break

This land rather than it should be a mart  
Of huxtering traffickers in honour, who  
Would weigh and value all things at a price !  
The rudest King who in the olden days  
Wreaked petty vengeance for his petty wrongs  
Were nearer to my mood !

EOGHAN :

We did not weigh—

CONRACH :

No ! 'tis his passion's madness ! Are not you  
Thuahal, the King, who broke those olden men  
Because they would not cast revenge behind  
And build your greater peace ?

THUAHAL :

I did not break



These rude high-hearted Kings to set a race  
Of hucksters in their room!

EOGHAN :

What! Hucksters! we  
Who gave up all that Kings can give that you  
Might be a greater King than all High-Kings  
Who went before! we who have kept the pact  
That you now break—a race of hucksters!

CUROI :

We  
Were trusting hucksters then, who could believe  
There ever yet was King who could forgive  
An injury!

THUAHAL :

'Tis false! I have forgiven  
All wrongs that men have done! But this is not  
A wrong that life endures! I'd rather call  
Those dead men back again, who drank revenge  
As life's essential air, than stoop to be  
What you demand of me!

CONRACH (*despairingly moves away from*

THUAHAL) :

Then there are some  
Who have been boastful with high heads when  
men  
Spoke of great Kings, who shall grow silent!

EOGHAN :

They

Were chaffering hucksters in the market-place  
Who could not understand a High-King's peace.

THUAHAL :

Your tongue grows dangerous !

EOGHAN :

Threats are useless here !

CUROI :

No threat shall ever force us to believe  
That there's a higher honour that demands  
That High-King Thuahal's private injuries  
Should be revenged, while ours however great  
Must lie, lest they should break his laws of peace !

FERGUS :

We are not gathered here to talk of peace !  
If you have not the courage to avenge  
The murdered Queens—

CUROI :

You take too much, my lord,  
Upon yourself to talk of courage—you  
Who have not shown a Munster King your sword  
Since Aicill battle—

THUAHAL :

Silence !

EOGHAN :

We will not  
Be silent while the land is wasted—while  
The great is shattered for the small, and he  
Who offers life as eric is refused  
That you may ravage! If you do this deed  
I say here now before the eyes of men  
That Eochy fights for right and truth and law  
And Ireland's justice—Eochy and not you!

CONRACH :

But this is madness, Eoghan—

FERGUS :

He who slew  
Thuahal's two daughters fights for Ireland's  
rights!

THUAHAL (*coldly*) :

We thought to find one enemy, my lords,  
It seems we find a second!

CUROI :

Aye! a third!

EOGHAN :

At last we know you! You for whom we gave  
The immemorial right of vengeance up  
That had been ours—

(THUAHAL *springs up.*)

CUROI :

High-King—do not forget  
That there remains one pact no King can break.  
We are your guests—come neath your guar-  
antee !

THUAHAL :

Go !

EOGHAN :

You need never fear we shall not go  
From this accursed house !

*(He holds up his hands in invocation.)*

Ye Firbolg Gods !

Ye wolvish, vulpine, Attacotti Gods  
Of vengeance and destruction, you have won !  
This land is yours again ! Out, Munstermen !  
Out ! Out ! I say ! what business have we here !

*(He goes out and the others after him. As  
they are going out FERGUS speaks) :*

FERGUS :

Or anywhere that men do deeds, not talk !

*(CUROI turns round.)*

CUROI :

We yet may meet, you yelping northern hound,  
Where you with less protection from High-Kings  
Shall learn what deeds a Munsterman can do !

*(He goes out.)*

CARBERY :

'Tis a good riddance !

CONRACH :

Aye and so were you !

THUAHAL :

•Conrach of Connaught—are you too of those  
Who leave when trouble comes ?

CONRACH :

I do not leave !  
You still are Thuahal ! 'Tis too soon to change.

THUAHAL :

Then you will march with us to-morrow ?

CONRACH :

Yes !

FERGUS :

You have your answer Ros MacTreoin !

CARBERY :

'Tis war !

ROS (*fiercely to CARBERY*) :

Boor from a lime kiln ! 'Tis not you who goad  
The swiftly racing clans of splendid deed  
Against our Eochy !

(*He turns to the others.*)

High-King, Ulster King,

Conrach of Connaught and you gathered chiefs  
 I fling Clanbrassil's scorn into your teeth  
 In name of Leinster! No lord of our land  
 But trembled lest your Council should accept  
 Our Eochy's life as eric! now that you  
 Have freed our feet for battle—come, my lords,  
 Your welcome waits you! (*He goes out.*)

FERGUS (*fiercely*):

We shall meet again!

THUAHAL:

We march at day-break—Be you ready then!  
 Come Fergus, Conrach, I would speak with you.

(*THUAHAL and all the KINGS go out, leaving  
 CARBERY alone.*)

CARBERY (*exultantly*):

Soon shall the sky of Leinster blaze on high!  
 And 'twere a marvel if the Munster lands,  
 That neighbour it and see in sullen rage  
 Its ravaging, do not attract that blaze  
 Across their marches—

(*MONADHAR comes in.*)

You have news from Mal?

MONADHAR:

He only waits the signal to revolt

Upon your promise you would give your aid  
To make him King.

CARBERY :

What of the Pictish chiefs ?  
Have you had news of them ? They promised  
help.

MONADHAR :

Nine fleets already search the river mouths  
Of Ulster with a thousand savage bands  
Of Picts and Firbolgs from the northern isles,  
And still their galleys come with every wind.

CARBERY :

Go bid them join with Rocree's men at once  
And march on Tara while the King is caught  
With all his forces in the Leinster hills.

MONADHAR :

Will you not come to meet them with our men ?

CARBERY :

I could not bring our Gaileoin spearmen now,  
Thuahal distrusts me though he makes no sign.

MONADHAR :

Could you not come without them ? Oh, my  
lord,

I fear that 'tis not safe for you to wait  
So near those swooping talons !

CARBERY :

'Tis not safe  
But flight would rouse suspicion and this wave  
Of overpowering anger might turn back  
From Leinster's frontiers and engulf us all  
Before its force is spent in its own ruin !  
No ! I must march south with him, but when  
once  
The Picts and Rocree strike him in the back  
Perhaps the Gaileoins leaping at his throat  
Will be less to his liking ! As for Mal—

MONADHAR :

But he may claim High-Kingship then, my lord.

CARBERY :

If we but once have Thuahal in his shroud,  
Fear not but I shall deal with any Gael—  
Mal or another—who puts forth his claim  
To Irish Kingdoms ! They shall know when  
late !

*(They go out and the curtain falls.)*

END OF THE 4TH ACT.



## ACT V.

TIME : *Samhain Eve ; a month later.*

SCENE : *One of Eochy's southernmost fortresses in South Leinster now in possession of Thuahal. (THUAHAL alone in the large hall of the fort. There are two doors, one leading into the interior of the fort, the other opening from the outside.)*

THUAHAL :

My deeds have trod me down and I am now  
No longer Thuahal, but a little King  
Whose friend' is Fergus--Fergus and Carbery !  
Even Conrach, passionate in loyalty,  
Finds that he cannot keep for such a King  
His passion or his service and is gone !  
And now the last of all my nobler friends  
I too refuse myself ! (*A Captain comes in.*)

CAPTAIN :

My lord ! My lord !

THUAHAL (*to himself*):

Even I—half-drunken with the magical  
Wine of my greater deeds have tasted this  
Last dregs of my great vat and cannot drink!  
I too refuse this deed! else why have I  
Drawn back to-day before the final act  
That I have willed—sending that Ulster hound  
And Firbolg wolf to pull a quarry down,  
That I have gashed and wounded!

CAPTAIN:

My good lord—

THUAHAL:

A message from the battle?

CAPTAIN:

Yes, my lord,

The Leinstermen are driven into the pass.  
Cahoir is captured wounded; but, alone  
Eochy still holds our swiftest chiefs at bay.

THUAHAL (*to himself*):

Could I but hold that gap along with him,  
As in the days when we two rode together,  
No Ulster lord or slave barbarian  
Had ever faced the pass.

(*He notices the Captain.*)

Why do you wait?

CAPTAIN :

Cahoir, the wounded chief, would speak with you.

THUAHAL :

Go, bring him in. 'Twas he was Eochy's friend.

*(The Captain goes out.)*

Oh Eochy ! Eochy ! Had you been but true,  
We two had stormed the ramparts of the Gods  
And made them ours ! Now you take all my  
years

And tie them in the death-knot of your shroud !

*(The Captain and two Soldiers come in carrying CAHOIR.)*

CAPTAIN :

Cahoir, my lord.

*(Captain and Soldiers put CAHOIR on a couch and leave.)*

THUAHAL :

You too were once my friend  
When I had friends, Cahoir ; what do you wish  
From me ?

CAHOIR :

High-King, I would demand why you—

*(Messenger rushes in.)*

MESSENGER :

Fergus is fallen, my lord !

THUAHAL :

Fergus is dead !

MESSENGER :

Yes ; he and Eochy met and Fergus fell  
By Eochy's sword, but he now stands alone  
Ringed round with spears and men and soon  
must fall

THUAHAL :

Go bring me further news.

*(The messenger goes and THUAHAL turns  
to CAHOIR.)*

And you ?

CAHOIR :

I ask

Why you, who torture all our Leinster land  
Because of Eochy's madness, should now give  
His execution over to the man  
Whose brain has planned and shaped and carried  
through  
The ruin of your house !

THUAHAL :

What do you mean ?

CAHOIR :

'Twas Carbery Cinncait's hate used Eochy's love  
When he was blind with love to wreck your  
kingdom !

'Twas Carbery prisoned Fihir, Carbery loosed  
 Her on them that the sudden shock might kill  
 Either or both the Queens! 'Twas Carbery's  
     hand

That mixed the venom'd bowl that Fihir drank  
 When she would quench her rage and shame  
     in death!

THUAHAL :

Is this another lie?

CAHOIR :

I do not lie!

THUAHAL :

You do not lie. I know it—feel it! You—  
 You do not lie! Oh, why did I not know!

CAHOIR :

Eochy is not yet lost! 'Tis not too late,  
 Perhaps to save him yet!

THUAHAL (*rushing to the door*) :

Captain! Captain!

(*As he rushes to the door a messenger rushes  
 in.*)

MESSENGER :

Victory! my lord! Eochy, the King, is slain!

THUAHAL :

Too late!

CAHOIR :  
Eochy is slain !

MESSENGER :  
They bring his head.  
High-King that you may feast your eyes !

CAHOIR :  
His head !

MESSENGER :  
'Twas Carbery Cinncait's hand that struck it off  
As he lay gasping !

THUAHAL :  
Carbery Cinncait !

MESSENGER :  
They  
Stood round the wounded King but could not  
strike  
One who had been your tanist and your son ;  
But Carbery came and laughed and struck it off !  
(CARBERY *rushes in with other chiefs.*)

CARBERY :  
Victory ! High-King ! We bring you victory !  
(*He starts when he sees CAHOIR.*)

THUAHAL :  
You shall have your reward ! Lords, seize that  
man !

CARBERY :

Thuahal—you do not dare

*(The Chiefs hesitate astonished.)*

THUAHAL :

Seize him at once !

*(Guards and Chiefs seize him.)*

To break the tool and leave the craftsman's hand  
That used it, were poor wisdom !

CARBERY :

Thuahal ! I—

THUAHAL :

You surely did not dream I could complete  
My scheme of vengeance, while your head was on.

*(He turns to the guards.)*

Bid them not bring King Eochy's head until  
This slave's head waits upon it, for the head  
Of him who once was tanist and the son  
Of a High-King must not come unattended  
To sit with me, now we once more are friends,  
And share my vengeance feast !

*(CARBERY laughs bitterly.)*

CARBERY :

Fear not High-King  
He shall come well-attended ! I have sent  
The invitations out for this your feast,

And a still greater feast than you had thought  
on!

Many shall come to that high festival,  
Bringing their deeds as gifts, and many there  
Shall leave their heads before my feast is done!  
You too, perhaps! For this is not a feast  
To celebrate a vengeance for a woman,  
A paltry vengeance of a little King,  
Such as you planned, my lord! This is a feast  
To consecrate the vengeance for a race  
That has been murdered—comely, swift and  
true,

An olden gentle race, more beautiful  
Than those dead Queens, until your Gaelic wolves  
Had sunk their slavering fangs into its throat—

THUAHAL:

Have you yet done?

CARBERRY:

I have not done! I love  
This land more dear than you do and I speak  
My love before I go! You will not dare  
Forbid that I shall speak it! you who sold  
This Kingdom for a petty personal  
Hunger of love and hatred! You, the King,  
Who were my tool not less than he who lies  
Headless within that gap, because your love



For Ireland, mean and paltry, could not stand  
 The first rude shock of passion more than his !  
 Where now is your high unity, great King,  
 Whose Kingdoms tear each other's throats and  
 shall,

Until a new invader pulls them down,  
 And tramples them to dust and death, as you  
 Have trampled down my people ! But, you grow  
 Impatient, and I would not have you keep  
 Our guests too long in waiting ! List, they come.

*(Noise heard outside.)*

THUAHAL :

Go take him in and slay him.

CARBERY *(waving off the guards)* :

There's no haste !  
 For that death-feast that you and I have made  
 For all the generations of your Gaels  
 Shall wait the feasters ! Many thousand years  
 They shall be glutting when you are forgot  
 Who made their banquet ! There's no need of  
 haste.

*(The guards begin to drag him towards the  
 inner door when he suddenly breaks away  
 from them and dashes towards the outer  
 door crying out) :*

What ! Gaileoins to the rescue !

THUAHAL :

Cut him down !

*(The guards fling themselves on him.)*

CARBERY *(struggling)* :

Rescue ! my Gaileoins ! Rescue ! Monadhar.

*(They cut him down. He falls dying and cries while falling).* Oh, Mal ! Oh, Monadhar !

Where do you wait.

*(He dies. THUAHAL comes over silently and looks at the body. CARBERY'S Gaileoin attendant slinks out.)*

THUAHAL :

He had a King's stuff in him, but 'tis well  
 He's gone ! His wish was higher than his reach !  
 And he, whom I have loved, who led my feet  
 To the compelling treachery of his grave  
 'Tis well he too is gone ; though I must pay !  
 Now all are gone and I shall build my peace  
 Alone this second time—the better perhaps  
 For that King's solitude—devoid of all  
 That fills and occupies the human heart  
 And gives life's work its gladness.

*(A Messenger rushes in.)*

What is that ?

MESSENGER :

Mal Rocree comes and vast outlandish hordes,  
Uncouth and dreadful, ravage all your lands  
Of Meath and Tara—

THUAHAL :

Mal !

CAHOIR :

'Tis Carbery's guests !

THE MESSENGER :

All through the night the blaze of fortresses  
And burning homesteads lights the midland  
skies ;

While, as a sign of hatred on the Gael,  
Their shouting hosts are feasting under shield  
With insult upon Thuahal—calling him  
With wild barbarian yells and hideous cries  
To meet them on the Bog of battle !

THUAHAL :

Mal

Coming to ruin what my hands have built  
Upon the Bog of battle !

CAHOIR :

While those hands  
That built with you now—

THUAHAL :

There are others left !

We still have men to meet him !

*(Messenger rushes in.)*

You have news ?

MESSENGER :

The Gaileoins have deserted you, my lord,  
They've heard of Carbery's death and hasten  
north

Crying for vengeance !

THUAHAL :

I'd forgotten them.

But they must not escape. Captain.

*(To a Meath Chief.)*

CAPTAIN :

My lord.

THUAHAL :

Send out the swiftest of the troops of Meath  
To cut the Gaileoin spearmen off before  
They reach the foreigners.

CAPTAIN :

The men of Meath  
Were flung by Carbery first against the pass,  
Till Eochy broke our stoutest clans and we  
Had lost our bravest warriors and chiefs !

We can give neither battle nor pursuit  
 To Gaileoin bands who did not strike a blow  
 Till Fergus won the pass !

THUAHAL :

I should have known !  
 Go bid the Ulstermen pursue at once  
*(Another Captain rushes in.)*  
 Before they have escaped us ! I myself  
 Will lead them !

2ND CAPTAIN :

There are none to lead, my lord,  
 The troops of Fergus have all left the camp  
 Upon a sudden news that their new King  
 Mal Rocree puts a price upon your head !

THUAHAL :

The Ulster troops are gone !

2ND CAPTAIN :

They are all gone.

CAHOIR :

No elements of all the wheeling sky  
 Can save this High-King now !

2ND CAPTAIN :

The men of Meath  
 Are all that now remain of your great hosts,

And they so torn and shattered in that shock  
 'Gainst Eochy that their swordsmen fit for fight  
 Scarce count a hundred, while Mal Rocree's men  
 Are countless thousands !

THUAHAL :

Then the tale is done !  
 Ended by Rocree ! 'Tis a sorry ending  
 For us and Ireland !

Still go marshal them  
 In battle-order. There is yet one fight  
 That they and I must do before we rest !  
 Go tell them that. How near are Rocree's  
 hosts ?

MESSENGER :

They are almost upon us.

THUAHAL :

So 'tis best.  
 And, Captain—

1ST CAPTAIN :

Yes, my lord,

THUAHAL :

Have Cahoir sent  
 To some safe place before they cut us off.  
 He once was Fihir's and King Eochy's friend.  
 He must not fall disabled to their hands.



CAHOIR :

There's no night  
Can quench our sun beneath its ebbing dark !  
He'll come again and yet again—King Thuahal—  
In many forms and men ; but evermore  
His day will grow and grow until this land  
Of Ireland shall be splendid with the deeds  
Of Gaelic men—yea and all other men  
Whose souls shall love her ! Carry me to battle  
That I too may go out fighting the dark !

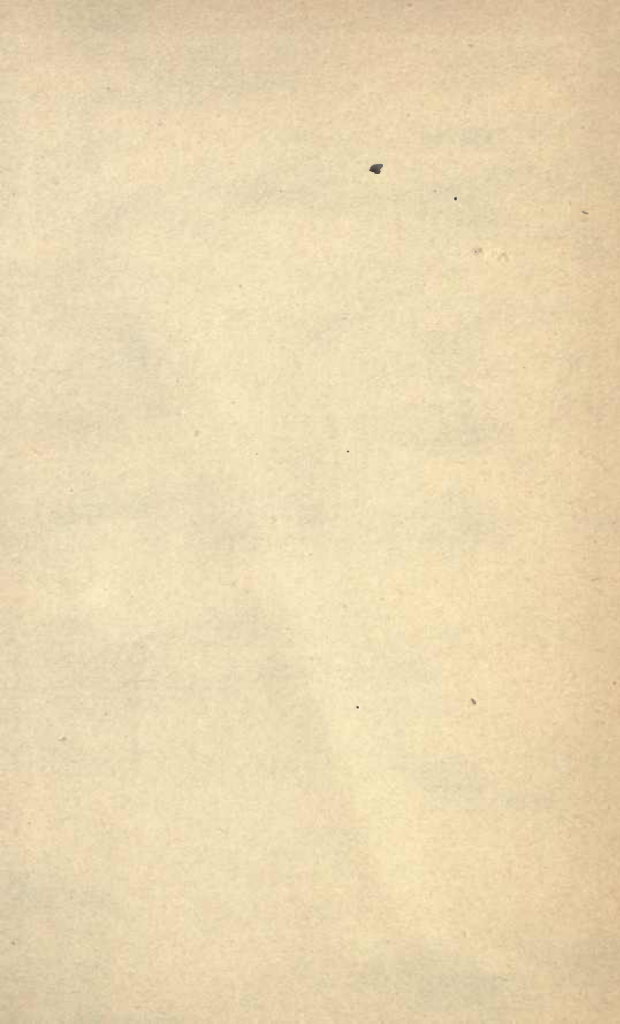
*(The soldiers carry him out as the curtain falls.)*

THE END.











UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



**A** 000 037 978 4

S  
A